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The Spy Scenario

MY TEN YEARS AS A COUNTER-

SPY. By Boris Morros as told
to Charles Samuels. Viking
Press. 248 pp. \$3.95.COPYRIGHT
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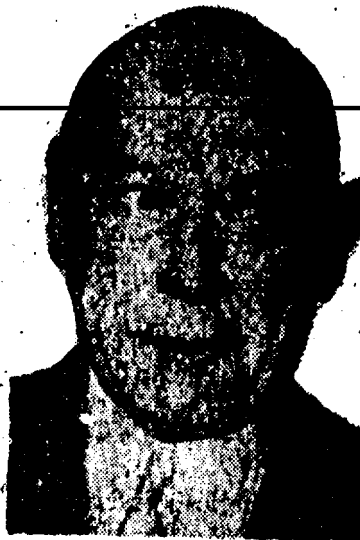
STATINTL

Near the beginning of this book, Boris Morros remarks: "I am not a man to quarrel with the Broadway adage, 'A little embellishment never ruined a good story.'"

A tantalizing problem (not the only one) in reading his memoirs is to decide where the facts stop and the embellishment begins.

One is inclined to recall his comment on Jack Soble: "Like most successful liars, he preferred putting enough facts in every story to give it an air of credibility."

Yet a great deal of the story Morros tells is unquestionably true. Of the Americans he mentions as his associates in Soviet espionage, the Sobles and Jacob Albam have pleaded guilty in



BORIS MORROS

American courts; the Zlatobskis and the Sterns have taken care to remain beyond the reach of those courts.

And there seems little doubt that Morros did work as an American counter-intelligence agent, at considerable personal risk, for a number of years.

On the other hand, there are inconsistencies in his narrative: for example, while on Page 99 is "a comprehensive account by Jane Foster of her years of work in Indonesia" between on Page 100 a recital of his activities in getting information from American CIA men and occupation officials in Austria.

Did Morros ~~even~~ actually know what the report contained, or are both descriptions of its contents simply guesses?

There are a good many things that raise questions. Why are most of the Soviet agents with whom Morros dealt preoccupied with money, alcohol, and promiscuous sex in contrast to the almost uniformly ascetic spies with whom Whitaker Chambers dealt?

Were the NKVD really such patsies that they let Morros string them along for years, doing almost nothing for them?

When, after years of contacts with the Russians, he finally went to the FBI, why did the agents who ~~had~~ him tell him that they had been waiting for him a long time? And did he really ~~not~~ suspect that the FBI had been following him until after he made contact with it?

There may well be satisfactory answers to all these questions. But they will have to come from a fuller account than the present one.